

# J553: Digital Media Editing/Production

## Spring 2018 syllabus

This course will allow students to be immersed in a newsroom environment, build their experience and prepare for internships. As a large part of the class, students will work for the University Daily Kansan and Kansan.com, editing stories, writing headlines and cutlines, creating packages, working on search engine optimization and creating graphics.

J553 builds on the skills of JOUR 419: Multimedia Editing, giving students hands-on experience with editing stories and creating packages for a live publication. Students will delve deeper into the finer points of editing and hone their critical-thinking skills.

Requirement: Must obtain a grade of C (2.0) or higher to advance.

### Course goals

- Improve your **critical-thinking skills**, especially your ability to **read at a deeper level, ask pointed questions** and **think in innovative ways**.
- Improve your **understanding of news story structure**: completeness, news value, interest.
- Improve your sense of a **fair, complete, accurate news story**: correct facts, inclusion of appropriate and diverse sources, and lack of bias, generalizations and stereotypes.
- Hone your **language skills** – including grammar, vocabulary and style – and helping you apply that understanding to the material you edit.
- Improve your **ability to move between print and online**, and to create visual elements for stories.
- Understanding the **principles and practice of fact-checking and source verification**.
- Understand how to read, use and accurately present **numbers and data**.
- Develop an understanding of **online content management**, search engine optimization and social media optimization, and digital analytics.

### Things to know

**Instructor:**

Dr. Lisa McLendon  
lisamclendon@ku.edu  
112 Stauffer-Flint  
785-864-7623

**Office hours:**

M/W: 9-11- a.m.  
T/Th: noon- 3 p.m.  
F: 9 a.m.-noon  
and by appointment

**Class meets:**

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. M/W  
107 Stauffer-Flint

**Kansan newsroom:**

Second floor of Dole  
785-766-1491

**Books and materials:**

- AP Stylebook. **You will have free access to the online stylebook** through the Kansan, but feel free to buy a paper edition if you want one.
- Reading materials posted on Blackboard.
- The University Daily Kansan Policy, Style and Layout Guide (in AP stylebook online).
- Social media accounts, which you should use to follow the news (especially the Kansan) and your #J553 classmates.

- Develop a strong sense of **story management** and **collaboration** with co-workers.
- Develop your **leadership skills** and your understanding of professionalism, ethics, accuracy, fairness and diversity in the workplace.
- Deepen understanding of the **news media industry** and editors' roles in it.

## Meeting the goals

We will work toward the course goals in several ways:

- **Newsroom shifts:** This is the heart of the class, providing an opportunity to gain hands-on experience editing, writing display type, and managing online content.
- **In-class critiques, discussions and exercises**
- **Professional development**
- **Relevant readings and assignments**

## In-class work and engagement

During the class meetings, we will discuss topics relevant to editing, current events and issues in journalism. We will also talk about the good and not-so-good work in the Kansan (see "Critiques"). So do the readings, keep up with the Kansan and **come prepared to participate**. Stay engaged with the discussion and please don't be a distraction to your classmates: **Please turn your phones off during class and use other electronic devices only for class work.**

It is important that you feel comfortable expressing ideas and opinions, different perspectives and diverse experiences. **Be respectful of others** whose viewpoints and experiences may not be the same as your own.

## Critiques

Every Monday we'll critique one aspect (print, web, social media) of the Kansan and Kansan.com. The intent of the critique is not to call out individuals for mistakes, but to provide assessments of the quality of reporting, editing, presentation and multimedia components, pointing out both strengths and weaknesses. **Each person** is expected to contribute to critiques in class; the area of focus (print, web, social media) will be specified beforehand. This means that you need to thoroughly read the Kansan on all platforms.

## Assignments

Any assignments are due by class time on the due date. *Late work will not get credit.*

## Kansan work

Keep track of the stories you edit for the Kansan and pull them out of the paper or link to them on the website. Each week, **turn in a list** via Blackboard (under "Journals") of all the stories you edited on your previous shift – including wire stories, briefs, calendar items, sports roundups, etc., as well as page proofs – plus comments on how you approached edits, headlines, trims, etc. If you had a particular issue with a story, briefly note what it was and how you resolved it. This helps both of us keep track of what you're editing, and it's basically free points, so make sure you do these each week. *Late work will not get credit.*

## Social media

Social media is an important part of editing: Many editors manage social media accounts and track engagement for their news organizations, and all journalists should be using social media to follow the news, trends and industry happenings, as well as to share their own content. You should use your professional accounts to gather and share information relevant to your work as a journalist. Use the hashtag #J553 to share items of interest.

## Keeping up with the news

You should also keep up with events on campus and in Lawrence with the Kansan and the Lawrence Journal-World, as well as national and world events. Be prepared to discuss current events and industry news in class.

## Career development

Each student should already have an **online portfolio** that includes examples of your best work, and that helps define you as a journalist. Start saving examples of your editing work from the beginning of the semester: headlines, stories you edit, summaries you write, cutlines, and so on. Your portfolio should reflect your goals and highlight your work and experience. You also need to create or update your profile on **LinkedIn**.

## Engagement and professionalism (E&P)

Approach this course as you would a job: you don't just fail to show up for work (not if you want to keep the job), so don't just fail to show up for class or for your editing shifts. If you cannot attend class or if you are going to be late, please call or e-mail me. Absences from class will affect your grade.

**Attendance is mandatory for all copy editing shifts**, as well as at meetings called by Kansan editors. ***\*\*Each absence from an editing shift may result in a deduction of one letter grade from your final course grade.*** But stuff happens: If you will miss or be late for an editing shift, **you must inform me AND your editors at the Kansan** as soon as possible and make a **sincere and timely effort** at securing a replacement. You have a list of all the people in the class and their contact info. It is OK to swap shifts with classmates **as long as you let me know and let your Kansan supervisor know.**

## Grading

Grading for this class is on a +/- system:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93+	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	59-

Your grades will be kept on Blackboard with a current running total. Here's how your final grade breaks down:

- **40 percent:** UDK editing
- **30 percent:** Assignments
- **15 percent:** Final Project
- **10 percent:** E&P
- **5 percent:** Portfolio

**There is no extra credit. Don't ask.  
Just show up and do the work.**

## Advanced Editing Rubric

These are the criteria I will use when assigning grades to your Kansan editing work:

### Story management

**A** - Catches nearly all errors in stories. Checks facts, numbers and names, and shows a high level of skepticism while editing. Ensures stories are properly structured and complete. Shows a mastery of and a comfort with grammar and applies grammatical rules appropriately. Demonstrates familiarity with AP and Kansan style and uses style correctly throughout stories. Ensures published stories are complete, fair and easy to understand, flow well and reflect good judgment. Applies skills consistently. Does not insert errors or make changes for the worse.

**B** - Catches most errors, but lets some errors slip through. Could improve on skepticism. Is sometimes hesitant about making significant changes to stories.

**C** - Catches obvious errors but shows insufficient attention to the finer details of style, grammar and usage. Published stories are often in need of significant rewording or restructuring.

**D-F** - Makes detrimental changes or inserts errors while failing to make necessary edits.

### Headlines, cutlines, other display type

**A** - Writes accurate, enticing headlines. Moves beyond the obvious and the clichéd. Cutlines add depth to the story and don't simply state what is obvious from looking at the picture. Summaries invite the reader without telling the entire story and other display type is free of errors.

**B** - Headlines are correct and appropriate but may be dull or not reflective of the most newsworthy or interesting elements of the story. Cutlines contain all the basic

information, but don't add details from the story.

**C** - Headlines consistently fail to reflect the story and display type often contains errors. Cutlines leave questions about the context of the picture and summaries frequently repeat just the first paragraph.

**D-F** - Display type is incorrect or libelous.

### Work ethic

**A** - Flexible and open to suggestions about editing. Consistently calls reporters and asks relevant questions that help improve stories. Respects colleagues, arrives for shift on time and takes work seriously.

**B** - Mainly focused, but consistency is an issue. Quality of work varies from shift to shift or during a shift. Sometimes unwilling to compromise or listen to other approaches to a story.

**C** - Frequently late and off task. Does not seem to take work seriously and talks with reporters are a quick reading of changes rather than a meaningful discussion of how to improve the story.

**D-F** - Misses shifts. Does not communicate with reporters on significant questions about or changes to the story.

### Improvement

**A** - Works at improving weaknesses and accepts critiques with a positive attitude. Shows awareness of common personal mistakes and works to avoid them. Researches to find answers.

**B** - Improvement is visible over the course of the semester, but many errors have to be addressed repeatedly.

**C** - Demonstrates little improvement or self-awareness.

**D-F** - Does not demonstrate any interest in improving skills.

# The fine print

## Academic misconduct

In this class, and in all journalism classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts and research. In a work setting, if you choose to violate professional standards, you will be fired. In this class, if you choose to violate the standards for academic integrity, you'll fail the course, and you may be dismissed from the School of Journalism.

**Plagiarism** is stealing. It is taking someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words and presenting them as your own original work. This includes taking ideas from written sources, broadcast sources, online sources or work done by another student. Copying and pasting material directly from the Internet and presenting that work as if it were your own – that is, without quotation marks and proper attribution – is plagiarism. You will often need to incorporate another person's ideas, opinions and words into the stories you write, to make a point or to provide background. When you do this, it is essential that you attribute that information: explain where the information came from and give credit where credit is due.

**Fabrication** means that you made up information, sources, citations or quotes. This includes making up an entire interview or source or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic to make it sound better.

**Don't do it. Ever.** It's far better to miss a deadline and risk the wrath of your boss than to risk your credibility as a journalist.

**Content "recycling"**: The expectation in this class is that you've come to learn, to be creative, to stretch your imagination, and expand your skills. Therefore, all the work you do in this class must be original. That means no "recycling" of your previous interviews, assignments, stories or work from other classes. The J-School considers recycling previous coursework to be academic dishonesty.

## Disability accommodation

If you have a special need that may affect your learning and for which you wish to request accommodation, contact **KU Student Access Services** in the Academic Achievement and Access Center (AAAC), which coordinates services for eligible students. Information about services can be found [online](#), at the office in Strong Hall Room 22, or by calling 785-864-4064. Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course; you will need official documentation from the AAAC *before* accommodations are made.

## Weather

KU decides when the weather is bad enough to close. To see whether classes are canceled, call 785-864-7669.

## Recording of classroom meetings

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all in-class materials presented by the instructor, are the instructor's property. **Photography, audio or video recordings, or live-streaming of class meetings without instructor consent is prohibited.** Pursuant to KU's Policy on Commercial Note-Taking Ventures, commercial note-taking is not permitted in JOUR 553. Notes may be taken on in-class and course materials for personal use only. *\*\*Note-taking provided by a student volunteer for a student with a disability, as a reasonable accommodation under the ADA, is not the same as commercial note-taking and is allowed.*

### Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication or Falsification

The School of Journalism **does not** tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence or falsification of evidence.

Penalties for engaging in such behavior can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the school.

**If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult your instructor.**

*The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.*

#### Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

#### Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

# JOUR 553 Schedule of topics (Spring 2019)

*Subject to change depending on circumstances*

*Specific readings and assignments are in each week's materials on Blackboard.*

## **Weeks 1-2:** Intro and skills review

- Page proofing
- Kansan and AP style refresher
- Deep grammar

## **Week 3:** News analytics

- Using online metrics to understand traffic and reader behavior

## **Week 4:** Display type

- Print, mobile and online headlines
- News alerts
- Summaries
- Cutlines

## **Week 5:** Editing: Structure and content

- News stories
- Sports stories

## **Week 6:** Editing: Structure and content

- Feature stories
- Opinion columns

## **Week 7:** Managing news online

- Social media best practices
- Curation best practices

## **~ Spring Break ~**

## **Weeks 8-9:** Skepticism and fact-checking

- Asking questions
- Resources for verifying information
- How to tell if sources are real and reliable

## **Week 10:** Verifying online content

- Using tools to check information for accuracy and timeliness

## **Week 11:** Presenting fact-checks

- Effective ways of sharing accurate or corrected information

## **Week 12:** Stop and Think

- Recognizing biases
- Ensuring appropriate tone and accuracy

## **Week 13:** Plagiarism and fabrication

- How to spot it
- What to do if you find it

## **Week 14:** Presenting data and numbers

- Understanding polls, statistics and other numbers
- When and how to present news graphically
- Editing news graphics

## **Week 15:** Professional development

- Presentations of final projects
- Your professional online presence (portfolio, social media, LinkedIn)